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ABSTRACT

This report describes Partners in Accomplished Teaching, a project of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) designed to help increase the number of teachers achieving National Board Certification. It focuses on efforts in St. Paul, Minnesota; Mississippi; North Carolina; and San Antonio, Texas. The St. Paul program is a continual loop of support involving encouragement during pre-candidacy, encouragement during the NBPTS certification process, and commitment by new NBPTS certified teachers (NBCTs) to mentor future candidates. It involves Southwest State University and local public schools. The Mississippi effort provides teachers with a $6,000 annual salary boost for achieving NBPTS certification, reimbursement for the assessment fee, year-round support from NBPTS and other colleagues, and pre-candidacy and mentoring support. The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching provides programming to help NBPTS certification candidates prepare their portfolios. The state also supports candidates financially. The Accomplished Teaching Initiative in San Antonio, Texas, pays candidates' assessment fees, provides release days, and awards a stipend for achieving certification. The effort covers pre-candidacy, candidacy, score banking, and infusion of the Five Core Propositions of NBPTS certification into the school district. Profiles of accomplished teachers are included. (SM)

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Partners in Accomplished Teaching:

A Project of the
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
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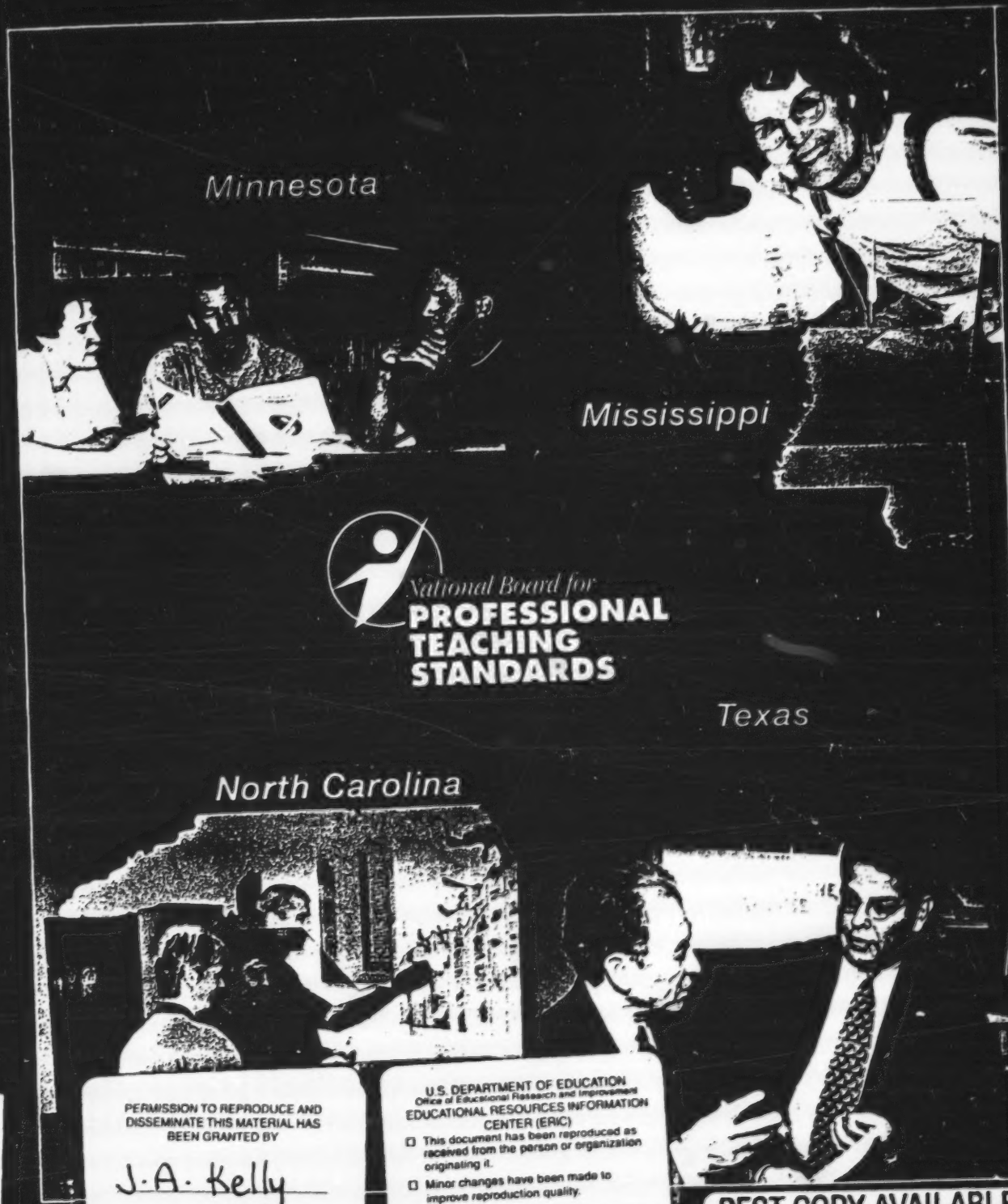

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Partners in Accomplished Teaching

A project of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards with support from the DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund

Message from the President

Let's Build on These Success Stories

Teachers are often on their own in the classroom. Unlike other professionals, they can't turn quickly to a co-worker to ask, "Do you think this will work?" or "Any suggestions?" Even so, accomplished teachers learn constantly from their colleagues, taking every opportunity to trade successful strategies and seek out new ideas.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) applies that same "trade secret" to National Board Certification®. Teachers who have achieved certification tell us that the support and encouragement of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs)™ helped them to succeed. To build on those individual success stories, NBPTS established four sites – in Cullowhee, N.C.; St. Paul, Minn.; San Antonio, Texas; and Starkville, Miss. – to recruit and reinforce the efforts of candidates for National Board Certification. We are so proud of the results of this collaboration, as demonstrated by the growing ranks of NBCTs in those regions, that we want to share these model programs with you.

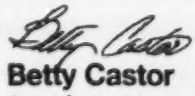
These demonstration sites were made possible through support of the DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund. A generous grant from this organization funded site coordinator salaries; mentor stipends; substitute salaries; office, printing, travel and postage expenses; equipment purchases; and outreach efforts.

We'd also like to acknowledge the hard work of our site coordinators: Mary Kay Cooley, John Guardia, Joe Paatalo and Peggy Swoger. Their leadership and persistence resulted in the creation of and continual improvement in programs and strategies that make fine models for other districts, counties and states designing support networks for teachers seeking National Board Certification. Each site developed unique strategies for recruitment, pre-candidacy support, mentoring, banking support and technical assistance.

Finally, we extend special thanks to the many NBCTs who lent a hand to colleagues seeking certification and to the candidates for National Board Certification who helped make the most of this project.

Funding from the DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund for this project is helping to increase the number of teachers achieving National Board Certification. Research demonstrates that National Board Certification improves student learning, and many teachers tell us that the certification process is the best professional development they have experienced. The strategies employed by the sites featured here can help us attain the goal of putting a caring, competent, accomplished teacher in every classroom in the United States.

One coordinator summed up the aim of National Board Certification as "raising the bar" for our profession. When we work together as "Partners for Accomplished Teaching," I'm happy to report that teachers are meeting those high standards.



Betty Castor
President, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

St. Paul, Minnesota

The St. Paul program is a continual loop of support: pre-candidacy, encouragement during the National Board Certification process and, finally, a commitment by new NBCTs to mentor future candidates.

St. Paul Program Inspires Minnesota Council on Teaching Standards

Working in partnership with Southwest State University in Marshall, Minn., the St. Paul site has developed a three-step process to support teachers through National Board Certification.

Year one, the **Pre-Candidacy Year**, offers sessions once or twice a month to provide a thorough exploration of the Five Core Propositions, teaching standards and the stages of the National Board Certification process.

St. Paul Public Schools didn't offer support for pre-candidates when Joe Paatalo, NBCT, Early Adolescence/English Language Arts, sought National Board Certification. However, as site coordinator for the program, Paatalo insists that the pre-candidacy class is key to the candidates' success.

"It makes such a difference," he says. "Since I went through the process without the support of a pre-candidate program, I've come to understand and appreciate the difference this collaboration and support can make."

The second step in St. Paul's program is the **Candidacy Year**, during which participants begin work on their portfolios and prepare for the assessment. The final step is the **Candidacy Support Program**, in which all NBCTs and those teachers who are retaking the test loop back to support new pre-candidacy participants. The program accommodates 20 or more candidates in each "class."

Paatalo, who mentors and teaches a pre-candidacy course in addition to serving as site coordinator, remembers when National Board Certification was introduced in St. Paul as a path for professional development and a way to recognize accomplished teaching. "I think it's been very successful, despite a few growing pains," he says.

The St. Paul program includes retreats and writing seminars and an Assessment Day to support teachers through the process. Assessment Day, during which candidates focus on preparing for the formal assessment exercises of National Board Certification, has proven to be particularly popular among teachers.

"There's such a tremendous amount of learning that goes on," Paatalo says. "The idea I try to convey is that it's not necessarily proving you're at the top of your game. Rather, it's about looking closely at what you do and addressing some of the things you don't do well."

The St. Paul district has produced for the parents of its students a videotaped program on literacy featuring three NBCTs. "We think it's appropriate to use NBCTs for this," says Nancy Hall, a staff development administrator.

An outgrowth of St. Paul's efforts involving National Board Certification is an organization called the Minnesota Council for the Advancement of Accomplished Teaching. This group of eight state colleges meets monthly to discuss and align NBPTS standards across the state with college curriculums.

Julie Hutcheson: Starting out strong

With three years experience as a kindergarten teacher, Julie Hutcheson found herself seeking out information about what it really means to be a good teacher. That quest led her to National Board Certification.

Hutcheson, who teaches at American Indian Magnet School in St. Paul, was working on her master's degree. One of her graduate class assignments was to write about what a teacher of the future needs to know. Hutcheson tracked down a veteran teacher and asked him, "What did you need to know then that teachers need to know now?"

"He gave me the Five Core Propositions," she says. "Then I had something to write about."

After she completed her assignment, Hutcheson heard about an information meeting on National Board Certification. "Once I was there, I knew this is what quality teaching is all about," she says.

Hutcheson admits to being a bit intimidated while interacting with other candidates and NBCT mentors with much more classroom experience than she had, but she found it validating to talk with these veterans about teaching.

With her own support network of colleagues at her school and with the help of the other eight candidates going through the process, Hutcheson achieved National Board Certification in Early Childhood/Generalist in 1996. She views that experience as a beginning, not an end. "I mentored a candidate who went through after me, and I did some work online offering information to other candidates," she notes.

She suggests that National Board Certification expands professional opportunities for teachers. "I think others now ask me for my opinion more often than they did before I achieved National Board Certification," says Hutcheson, who now serves on the NBPTS Board of Directors. "In my school I'm taking on leadership roles and serving on committees."

Marlene Greger: Virtual exposure to certification

Even though she sought National Board Certification before St. Paul introduced its pre-candidacy program, Marlene Greger had the good fortune to observe the certification process before experiencing it firsthand.

In 1996 three of Greger's colleagues who were working toward certification often used the big TV monitor in her science classroom to view and discuss the videos they were developing for their portfolios.

"I ended up watching their work and giving my opinion. It was sort of an informal pre-candidacy," says Greger, who herself achieved certification (Middle Childhood/Generalist) the following year.

Now a staff developer for St. Paul Public Schools, Greger helps other teachers working toward National Board Certification. "I like to pass on all the help that was given to me by my facilitator. I am so sold on pre-candidacy," she says. "It's such an opportunity to learn the standards and practice them before you do your candidacy."

Greger teaches in the pre-candidacy program, works with banking candidates in the mathematics area, and does whatever she can to encourage and assist teachers toward the goal of achieving National Board Certification. She's also involved in the new *Teachers of Color* program to help mentor new teachers of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

She plans to make the NBPTS Standards a central part of this program. "It will extend the benefits of our pre-candidacy program for these teachers," Greger notes.

"It's such an opportunity to learn the standards and practice them before you do your candidacy."

– Marlene Greger:
National Board Certified Teacher

Candidates for National Board Certification in the Southwest State University Learning Community Masters Program

Mississippi

"We are certifiable!"

—Slogan of Mississippi's World-Class Teaching Programs

Mississippi's Goal: 'World-Class Teaching Program'

Above: Peggy Swoger honored for her work in developing the university-based, statewide mentoring program for National Board Certification candidates in Mississippi

Mississippi teachers receive a $6,000 annual salary boost when they achieve National Board Certification and reimbursement for the assessment fee — and that's not all.

Candidates also receive year-round support from NBCTs and other colleagues through the state's World-Class Teaching Programs and the DeWitt-Wallace "Accomplished Teaching Initiative" at Delta State University (DSU). The DSU program includes a Standards-Study Summer Preparation Course, a pre-candidacy component and mentoring support. Candidates are organized in small groups by certificates and meet twice a month from October to April with an NBCT

The Standards-Study **Summer Preparation Course** is a four-day workshop to prepare potential candidates for the assessment process. Emphasis is on candidates' area of certification standards, reflective and analytical writing. The workshop is a prerequisite to entering the mentoring program. Continuing Education credits are available.

The Pre-Candidacy Program is a series of Saturday seminars for teachers who plan to enter the assessment process in one to three years. Monthly seminars are offered January through May.

The Mentoring Program, now in its third year at Delta State University, is the foundation of the Accomplished Teaching Program's work with candidates. Active candidates meet twice a month with peers and an NBCT. The candidates, approximately 50 per year at DSU, are grouped by certificate with a ratio of 10 candidates to one NBCT mentor. Mentors are paid $300 per year for each candidate mentored. Candidates receive three paid professional days while completing the portfolio.

"University and school districts working together definitely contribute to our success," says site coordinator Peggy Swoger. "We began with zero NBCTs and now we have 22 National Board Certified Teachers who can provide the mentoring and leadership necessary for growing the number of candidates in the Delta region. This site achieved all of its original goals involving minority candidates with 50% minority participation and 30% minority National Board Certification. Every candidate in the largely rural area has access to pre-candidacy programs and mentoring. Principals' knowledge of the process and their support of their teachers has helped us achieve a high level of participation," Swoger added.

Contact Dr. Gerry Sultan at DSU, (662) 846-4384, or email *gusultan@dsu.deltast.edu* if you would like more information about these programs.

Kathleen Caldwell: "An amazing feeling"

Kathleen Caldwell vividly remembers the day she learned she had achieved National Board Certification (Middle Childhood/Generalist).

"I opened the envelope in front of my class," she recalls. "My former students down the hall could hear me scream and came running to my room. Then the office announced it on the loud speaker. It was an amazing feeling."

Mississippi site coordinator Peggy Swoger introduced Caldwell to National Board Certification. "I didn't know anything about National Board Certification until Peggy called me. She was looking for people to be in the candidacy program." Caldwell says. "I went to the meeting and was immediately excited about it."

After teaching for almost 20 years, she viewed National Board Certification as a process to affirm her professional expertise. "The way I was teaching was not the way everybody down the hall was teaching, and I needed validation," says Caldwell, who has taught special education, fourth-grade and eighth-grade science.

When Caldwell sought National Board Certification, the state paid only a $3,000 stipend (which has since doubled) and reimbursed the assessment fee only for teachers who achieved National Board Certification (now all candidates are reimbursed).

"I had to really soul-search whether I wanted to put out the money, even though I might not get it back," she notes.

Ultimately, Caldwell decided it was worth it. Along the way, she discovered that teaching to the standards is crucial. Like many other candidates, she also gained confidence in her ability to express herself through writing.

"The mentoring was helpful," she adds. "Other teachers were able to share books they read and things they'd done in their class. When you read someone else's work, it gives you ideas."

As the first teacher to achieve National Board Certification in her district, Caldwell has become a leader who helps colleagues following the same path toward National Board Certification. She now teaches a summer standards workshop and is always available whenever candidates need help.

"I try to lead them in the right direction and offer support," she says.

Reba Thompson: "I actually enjoy writing"

When Reba Thompson was in sixth-grade, she discovered she had dyslexia and set out to teach herself to read.

That willingness to rise to a challenge has served Thompson well in her profession. Today she is a first grade teacher at Trigg Accelerated School in Greenville, Miss. She has a bachelor's degree in special education and a master's in reading and early elementary education. And she was the first teacher in the Delta to achieve National Board Certification (Early Childhood/Generalist).

The certification process reinforced Thompson's belief that quality learning results from quality teaching. "National Board Certification has intensified my teaching strategies forever," she says.

The writing and reflection required during the certification process also has enriched her practice. "Once you get the hang of the writing and the fluency, it's not hard." Thompson suggests. "I actually enjoy writing now."

She has even developed a pamphlet for candidates for National Board Certification in her district to share with their students' families about the certification process. That pamphlet suggests ways

"As a mentor I am able to assist, build professional and personal relationships, listen, share, nurture, observe, bond, play, have fun, plan, evaluate and think systematically using descriptive, analytical and reflective writing."

– ***Reba Thompson***
National Board
Certified Teacher

students and families can help support candidates.

Thompson sought certification before the state of Mississippi launched its pre-candidacy program, so she planned for three years on her own before submitting her application. During the certification process, "I went to sleep with standards in my head every night."

Today, Thompson puts her 24 years of teaching and her experience as a candidate for National Board Certification to work mentoring other candidates.

"As a mentor, I am able to assist, build professional and personal relationships, listen, share, nurture, observe, bond, play, have fun, plan, evaluate and think systematically using descriptive, analytical and reflective writing," she says.

Deborah Cole: "A chance to prove myself"

For Deborah Cole, who has been teaching for seven years, (NBCT, Early Childhood/Generalist) National Board Certification (Early Childhood/Generalist) represented "a chance to prove to myself that the things I do in the classroom are actually meaningful to students."

Cole praises the mentoring provided through the Mississippi program for helping her through the process, and she notes that the process strengthened her classroom writing skills and enhanced her versatility as a teacher.

She also cites a fresh perspective on the differences between each class and each student. "It's really made me more considerate of my students," she says. "I try to use every tool that I can to be creative and innovative in reaching my students. I'm making sure my activities and procedures are appropriate for my students."

Jo Haney: "Watching teachers grow"

Principal Jo Haney has seen teachers in her school grow professionally as they pursue National Board Certification.

"More than anything else, I guess I watch them reflect on what they're doing. I watch practices change and be refined," says Haney, who's been a principal for 12 years. "I even watched the friendship between teachers grow as they went through it together."

Teachers support their colleagues seeking National Board Certification by reading and critiquing their work. Haney chips in by reviewing their portfolios and gathering helpful resources for candidates.

Teachers who seek National Board Certification become leaders in the school. "I notice more self-confidence," Haney says. "They realize that the process has improved their teaching, and they want to help others try."

Although teachers require release time as they work toward National Board Certification, the benefits are worth the administrative time and expense, the principal notes. Teachers who've been through the National Board Certification process are more willing and able to take on leadership roles and challenges within the school.

"I've heard principals say it's a lot like a fever that just catches on," Haney adds.

North Carolina

Hundreds of teachers come to the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching each year for mentoring support and quiet solitude to reflect on their teaching practices.

In 1985 the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) was established as one of several statewide initiatives aimed at improving education. NCCAT's mission is to advance teaching as an art and profession. To accomplish this goal NCCAT offers weeklong residential seminars offering teachers innovative professional development. These seminars focus on various issues in the sciences and humanities, and they are approached from an interdisciplinary perspective.

In 1996, Governor Hunt asked NCCAT to provide programming to assist candidates for National Board Certification in preparing their portfolios. To meet this challenge, NCCAT created NBPTS support seminars based on NCCAT's pioneering professional development model. The seminars maintain a highly academic focus while encouraging teachers to reflect on how they teach. This aspect of the traditional NCCAT seminar makes for a great fit with the National Board Certification process and the importance it places on reflective writing. NCCAT has found that the success rate among candidates attending these seminars is greater than it is for those who go without NCCAT support. Today, NCCAT offers 16 support seminars for National Board Certification, and hundreds of candidates spend time there to prepare for the process.

"At NCCAT, we emphasize intensive study and evaluation of the candidates' portfolios with assistance of NBCT mentors. We keep the focus on the reflective nature of the process geared toward improvement in the classroom," says Mary Kay Cooley, National Board Program Director at NCCAT."

The state supports candidates financially as well, paying the assessment fee and a 12% salary increase to teachers who achieve National Board Certification.

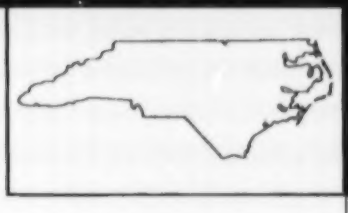
Due to outstanding state support, NCCAT is seeing precipitous increases in candidates that would like to attend their seminars. NCCAT hopes to be able to serve more in the future.

Interested candidates for the 2001-2002 support seminars are encouraged to check the NCCAT website at: *www.nccat.org* or email Mary Kay Cooley at *natboard@nccat.org*.

North Carolina Program Offers Residential Approach to Development

Above:
Mary Kay Cooley, center fellow coordinator of NCCAT National Board Support Seminars

Photo By Bob Schatz



Evie Garner: "Finding renewal in certification"

After 23 years in the classroom, Evie Garner found renewal and affirmation in achieving National Board Certification.

"It was a wonderful experience as far as revisiting why I became a teacher," says Garner, NBCT, Early Adolescence/Mathematics.

Her mentor played such an important role in her work toward certification that Garner decided to keep the momentum rolling by mentoring candidates at NCCAT.

Even though her area of specialty is math, Garner was assigned to mentor six physical education teachers. She found herself relating to what they were going through and being able to help them through the process. Facilitating candidates to understand the questions and bounce ideas off each other was a valuable experience for the candidates and their mentor.

"It was so fulfilling. I just kept telling them they could do it," Garner says. "It's a process that is workable and doable if you take the time to understand it. It really is a way to keep growing."

Cassandra Tyson: "Take teaching to another level"

One of the candidates Evie Garner worked with was Cassandra Tyson, a physical education teacher at Spring Creek High School in Seven Springs, N.C. Tyson became interested in seeking certification after participating in an NBPTS pilot program.

"I always wanted to take my teaching to another level," she says. "The experience at NCCAT was a must and a plus."

One of four teachers in her county working toward achieving National Board Certification in 2001, Tyson says the guidance and support provided by the NCCAT program has made all the difference. "The process showed me so much about me," she notes.

These days she's spending a lot of her time reading as she prepares for her assessment. "I'm trying to get used to reading against time," Tyson says.

LaVeta Weatherington: "A passion for art"

To some people outside education, art might seem a "fun" class, a break from the rigors of other academic endeavors. But 27-year veteran LaVeta Weatherington, a 2001 candidate for National Board Certification from Pitt County, N.C., understands the discipline her specialty requires and looks to National Board Certification as a validation for her work and passion.

"Getting through the process involves immersing yourself in the standards," Weatherington says. "You have to break that standard apart and ask yourself, 'What in that standard reflects what I'm doing?'"

Weatherington has taken her own advice and admits to "nursing every entry to the very end." She describes her work to achieve National Board Certification as "a positive experience and a big challenge" and is already making plans to assist other candidates. As the art coordinator for her county, Weatherington will mentor candidates and potential candidates.

"Getting through the process involves immersing yourself in the standards. You have to break that standard apart and ask yourself, 'What in that standard reflects what I'm doing?'"

– LaVeta Weatherington
Candidate, National
Board Certification

Tony Sapp: "Morning to night" commitment

Tony Sapp credits the NCCAT program with helping him to achieve National Board Certification (Adolescence and Young Adulthood/ Mathematics). Now he returns the favor by mentoring other candidates.

"These seminars are hard work," cautions Sapp, a mathematics teacher at Charles D. Owen High School in Blue Mountain, N.C. "We go sometimes from morning until night. But I continue to do them because it's exciting to be surrounded by committed professionals."

The seminars are a learning experience for current candidates and their mentors, who continue to pick up new teaching strategies, Sapp notes. "Not a year goes by that I haven't been given some great idea that I bring right back to the classroom."

Sapp finds a dual benefit in National Board Certification, which has made him a better teacher and validated his professional standing outside the classroom.

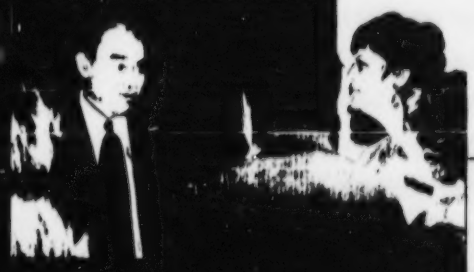
"People working on government commissions studying education in North Carolina now seek out NBCTs when they want answers," he notes. "I believe being an NBCT has given teachers a stronger voice in education policy in our home districts and in our state."

"People working on government commissions studying education in North Carolina now seek out NBCTs when they want answers. I believe being an NBCT has given teachers a stronger voice in education policy in our home districts and in our state."

– Tony Sapp
National Board
Certified Teacher

San Antonio, Texas

The Accomplished Teaching Initiative supports teachers through pre-candidacy and candidacy and aims to infuse the Five Core Propositions into every classroom.



Candidate Support Primary Aim of San Antonio, Texas Program

The San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) and the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) are working to help teachers achieve National Board Certification through a program managed and led by teachers and open to all teachers.

Through the Accomplished Teaching Initiative, the district pays candidates' assessment fees, provides release days and awards a stipend for achieving National Board Certification. The four-stage program covers pre-candidacy, candidacy, score banking and infusion of the Five Core Propositions of National Board Certification into the school district.

The **Pre-Candidacy Program** is a yearlong opportunity for teachers to gain a thorough understanding of the standards for National Board Certification in their area of specialty. They practice exercises from the NBPTS Facilitator's Guide so they are prepared for the portfolio and assessment exercises they will experience during candidacy. Teachers attend monthly large group sessions facilitated by a UTSA professor, SAISD teacher and an NBCT. Smaller groups schedule and meet in at least five sessions. Teachers who successfully complete the Pre-Candidacy Program are eligible for district support when they seek National Board Certification.

The UTSA professor and district facilitators who worked with pre-candidate teachers continue to guide them in the **Candidacy Program**. During the certification process, candidates plan portfolio exercises so they are completed with enough time for review and critique by other candidates. Teachers seeking certification continue to meet in large and small groups.

The third year of the program offers **Score Banking Candidacy** for participants who continue with the Accomplished Teaching Initiative. These teachers receive training and benefit from the expertise of colleagues who serve as editors. Financial support continues in the form of two additional release days to work on portfolio entries. The district pays the re-take assessment fee for up to two entries, encouraging banking candidates to continue to pursue exemplary teaching.

Infusion of NBPTS Principles involves making the Five Core Propositions part of the daily work of SAISD teachers and prospective educators attending UTSA. At the university those standards are included in teacher preparation programs and the coursework for teachers pursuing master's degrees.

For more information about San Antonio's Accomplished Teaching Initiative, contact the Governmental Relations/School & Community Partnerships Department at (210) 299-5508.

John Guardia: Opportunities for self-improvement

San Antonio program coordinator John Guardia sees numerous benefits to National Board Certification: "Just going through the process gets teachers writing and reflecting on what they do and why they do it. When they complete even that much, many say they're already a better teacher."

Despite its successful Accomplished Teaching Initiative, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) continues to face the challenge of gaining recognition at the state level for the value of National Board Certification.

"Recognition of National Board Certification by the state would help everything fall into place," Guardia says. "The cost would be taken care of and the district would be able to encourage more teachers to do this."

Currently, the district supports candidates for National Board Certification by paying their assessment fee.

Ignacio Salinas, state legislator and president of the Texas State Teachers Association, contends that National Board Certification is just what the teaching profession needs.

"I think it takes the professionalism of our educators to a national level like the National Bar Association," Salinas suggests. "It's an opportunity to move in a direction with clear standards."

"I think it takes the professionalism of our educators to a national level like the National Bar Association, it's an opportunity to move in a direction with clear standards."

– John Guardia

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Shelley Potter: The best professional development there is

A broken school air conditioner was the first step toward Shelley Potter's involvement in advocacy for National Board Certification.

"I was working at a school where there was no air conditioning," recalls Potter, president of the San Antonio Federation of Teachers. "Then we moved into a building that had air conditioning and suddenly my students were not falling asleep. They were getting a full day of instruction."

Upon discovering that 77 of the 92 schools in her area were not air-conditioned, Potter brought the issue up at a union meeting. The union president asked her to form a committee that lobbied for air conditioning to improve learning conditions. From that campaign, Potter has gone on to become a champion of other issues to support teachers, including National Board Certification. After 13 years in the classroom, Potter knows firsthand the value of professional development.

"The whole idea of elevating the teaching profession through National Board Certification is extremely important," she says. "Virtually every teacher I talk to — and not just in San Antonio — tells me it's the best professional development they've ever experienced."

"For that reason alone it's important to help teachers reflect on what they do and how certification can help them do an even better job with their students," she says.

Specifically, Potter works on behalf of teachers by getting the word out about what National Board Certification is and advocating for release days to provide teachers with uninterrupted time to work on portfolios. "We try to provide whatever support we can," she says.

Her work has paid off. SAISD boasts 14 NBCTs, more than any other district in Texas. However, recruiting candidates for National Board Certification is a continuing challenge, Potter adds. "Even if someone does not achieve certification, they can benefit and grow professionally."

"The whole idea of elevating the teaching profession through National Board Certification is extremely important. Virtually every teacher I talk to — and not just in San Antonio — tells me it's the best professional development they've ever experienced."

– Shelley Potter

Dr. Ruben D. Olivarez (left) discusses National Board Certification with San Antonio program coordinator John Guardia

Ruben Olivarez: Goal to "become exemplary"

National Board Certification plays a central role in SAISD's Vision 2005 Exemplary Plan, says Superintendent Dr. Ruben D. Olivarez.

"These teachers (who achieve National Board Certification) will be that cadre of highly trained individuals who could be the teachers of other teachers," Olivarez suggests. "The Vision 2005 goals for our district mean everybody is in the business of figuring out what we have to do to become exemplary."

Toward that end, professional development, in the form of achieving National Board Certification, becomes an opportunity, he says.

"NBCTs can start serving in other roles, such as instructional coordinators who facilitate teaching and learning throughout their school to benefit both students and teachers," Olivarez notes.

"One of the principles that guides me in providing leadership and direction for the school district is my belief that the teacher is the program." he adds. "Books provide facts. Buildings give us a comfortable place. Audio-visual and other materials help illustrate the lessons. But these lessons are only as good as the person at the head of the class. The SAISD is committed to the high standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and I encourage all teachers to consider achieving certification."

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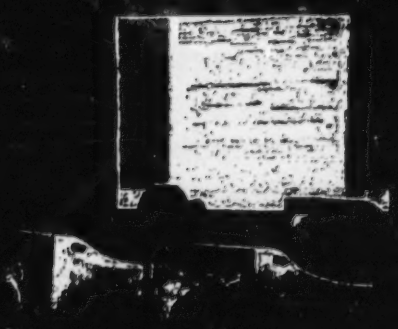

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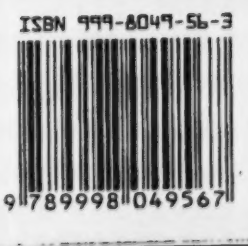

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San Antonio, Texas

The Accomplished Teaching Initiative supports teachers through pre-candidacy and candidacy and aims to infuse the Five Core Propositions into every classroom.

Candidate Support Primary Aim of San Antonio, Texas Program

The San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) and the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) are working to help teachers achieve National Board Certification through a program managed and led by teachers and open to all teachers.

Through the Accomplished Teaching Initiative, the district pays candidates' assessment fees, provides release days and awards a stipend for achieving National Board Certification. The four-stage program covers pre-candidacy, candidacy, score banking and infusion of the Five Core Propositions of National Board Certification into the school district.

The **Pre-Candidacy Program** is a yearlong opportunity for teachers to gain a thorough understanding of the standards for National Board Certification in their area of specialty. They practice exercises from the NBPTS Facilitator's Guide so they are prepared for the portfolio and assessment exercises they will experience during candidacy. Teachers attend monthly large group sessions facilitated by a UTSA professor, SAISD teacher and an NBCT. Smaller groups schedule and meet in at least five sessions. Teachers who successfully complete the Pre-Candidacy Program are eligible for district support when they seek National Board Certification.

The UTSA professor and district facilitators who worked with pre-candidate teachers continue to guide them in the **Candidacy Program**. During the certification process, candidates plan portfolio exercises so they are completed with enough time for review and critique by other candidates. Teachers seeking certification continue to meet in large and small groups.

The third year of the program offers **Score Banking Candidacy** for participants who continue with the Accomplished Teaching Initiative. These teachers receive training and benefit from the expertise of colleagues who serve as editors. Financial support continues in the form of two additional release days to work on portfolio entries. The district pays the re-take assessment fee for up to two entries, encouraging banking candidates to continue to pursue exemplary teaching.

Infusion of NBPTS Principles involves making the Five Core Propositions part of the daily work of SAISD teachers and prospective educators attending UTSA. At the university those standards are included in teacher preparation programs and the course work for teachers pursuing master's degrees.

For more information about San Antonio's Accomplished Teaching Initiative, contact the Governmental Relations/School & Community Partnerships Department at (210) 299-5508.

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John Guardia: Opportunities for self-improvement

San Antonio program coordinator John Guardia sees numerous benefits to National Board Certification: "Just going through the process gets teachers writing and reflecting on what they do and why they do it. When they complete even that much, many say they're already a better teacher."

Despite its successful Accomplished Teaching Initiative, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) continues to face the challenge of gaining recognition at the state level for the value of National Board Certification.

"Recognition of National Board Certification by the state would help everything fall into place," Guardia says. "The cost would be taken care of and the district would be able to encourage more teachers to do this."

Currently, the district supports candidates for National Board Certification by paying their assessment fee.

Ignacio Salinas, state legislator and president of the Texas State Teachers Association, contends that National Board Certification is just what the teaching profession needs.

"I think it takes the professionalism of our educators to a national level like the National Bar Association," Salinas suggests. "It's an opportunity to move in a direction with clear standards."

"I think it takes the professionalism of our educators to a national level like the National Bar Association, it's an opportunity to move in a direction with clear standards."

– John Guardia

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